



## PRESS CLIPPINGS

Office of Program Resources Management

(632) 552-9907

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### ECONOMIC GROWTH

(Economic Reform, Private Sector Development, Trade and Agriculture)



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#### *Ambassador Kenney sees things improving in Basilan*

**U**S Ambassador to the Philippines Kristie Kenney said that she sees things improving in Basilan.

This was the statement she relayed to the members of the local media as reply to a question about her assessment on the present situation in Basilan during an interview last January 10 in Tuburan.

Ms. Kenney was a guest of honor in the turnover ceremony of the newly completed P46 million Campo Uno-Tuburan upgrading road project, which was

funded by the United States Agency for International Development and Growth With Equity in Mindanao (USAID-GEM). This was her fifth visit to Basilan.

Kenney explained that while not everyday is improvement in the island province, but now people are more interested in development than they were before. She said: “They always talk about positive things and I think this is a good sign. A sign that people are increasingly interested in development.”

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#### **Kapihan...**

In the same event, she told reporters that the campaign against terrorism in Basilan has been working well. She attributed this to the growing vigilance of the civilian population. “I think that’s going well too and I think part of that is you got a lot of communities who are working with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).”

Describing Basilan as one of the beautiful parts of the Philippines that has such great potential, great natural resources and a beautiful climate, she said she is pleased to see the combination of mayors working together, working with foreign donors with the military to really improve the lives of the people of Basilan.

“The road we see now, it’s the road to prosperity. The road that will allow children and mothers to travel safely to schools, clinics and that will allow farmers to bring their products to market and that will allow citizens to indeed connect with neighboring cities and neighboring towns here in Basilan.”

Based on GEM reports.

USAID financed the construction of 40 regional infrastructure projects and 830 smaller barangay infrastructure projects in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and neighboring conflict-affected areas of Mindanao.

It said that in addition to supporting economic growth, these infrastructure facilities demonstrated the continuing commitment of both the Philippine and US governments to fostering peace and development in Mindanao.

Kenney also confirmed the holding of another Balikatan in Basilan this year, but no anti-terror training would be conducted and that the focus would be on humanitarian assistance for poor people.

“We’re working a lot of projects here, including suitable infrastructure link up road and medical and dental missions. Through USAID and GEM, we’ve got three to four ready or almost completed projects here,” she said.

Military officials at the Western Mindanao Command (WesMinCom) said areas where Balikatan would be held could expect such building projects as roads, bridges and schools. The annual RP-US military exercises would begin on February 18.

Last year, 390 American soldiers and 1,171 Filipino troops, including a 700-security force, joined the exercises under the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA).

For your comments or suggestions, please e-mail at [hader.glang@gmail.com](mailto:hader.glang@gmail.com) or contact/text at mobile phone number 09203145750